

won't let me go—you won't ever let me go?" she pleaded. He took her into his arms. "Dear," he answered, "there isn't anything in this world or any other world that shall take you out of my life or out of my heart!"

THE mist passed. Once more the sunshine streamed down upon them. As they crossed the lawn half an hour later they met Lucille slowly emerging from the house. She stood looking at them with the shadow of a strange smile upon her lips.

"So the grayness has all passed away," she remarked, "and we are going to have tea out here after all. What can have happened to Aynsworth? I wonder. He looks like a big boy chuckling over some huge joke."

Lakenham was certainly looking immensely pleased with himself. He was standing upon the lawn with a

"Do play," she murmured. "I shall love to look on." "We will all look on," Lakenham decided. "Perhaps my chance will come then to talk for a little time with Miss Cluley. I consider that she has been most shamelessly monopolized ever since she arrived here."

Sybil sighed. "You must remember, all of you," she replied, "that Sir Jermyn is my dramatist. Naturally he has a great deal to say to me."

Lakenham smiled as he drew out his cigarette case from his pocket. "I too," he declared, looking at her boldly, "can find something to say to you, Miss Cluley. I am only longing for the opportunity."

There was a moment's silence. Jermyn, who had gone away to get his racket, came toward them, frowning slightly.

"Are you sure that you wouldn't rather come for

consider him to be the most shameless person I have met with in the whole course of my experience."

Sybil's eyes followed her almost despairingly as she moved slowly toward the house. Lakenham changed at once into her vacant chair. Jermyn, from his place on the courts, saw what had happened and promptly served two faults.

"Lucille will chaff one all the time," Lakenham remarked. "Bit useful with her tongue too, isn't she? All the same I have been rather anxious to have a little chat with you, Miss Cluley."

"Really?"

"You know," he went on, "I wish you wouldn't behave as though I wanted to eat you up, or something of that sort. I am of a forgiving nature. I harbor no animosity, and I bear no grudges."

She knew then that he remembered. Everything for a moment seemed to recede from her. The voices of the tennis players seemed to come from some far-off world. The breeze in the trees, the perfume of the burnt cedars, the fragrance of the roses, always insistent, surely belonged to one of those hazy, half-forgotten days! This was another world in which she was living now,—the world of her misery!

"You see, my memory isn't quite so rotten as you must have thought it was," Lakenham continued. "I haven't forgotten all about the Gaiety Theater at Blackpool and Miss May Marvis."

She was trembling. Her eyes, which sought his now, were full of tears. "The money!" she faltered. "I ought to have sent you the money back. Oh, I have thought of it a hundred times; but I was afraid—I was afraid that you might trace me through it! It was wicked of me!"

He laughed loudly, almost boisterously. "You silly child!" he exclaimed. "What do you suppose that few pounds meant to me? You can't imagine I ever intended you to repay it? It was a gift, of course. It was your broken promise that I minded."

She looked at him like a wounded animal. Nothing that he could possibly have said could have hurt so much. "I was mad!" she murmured. "We were both half starved; the company had come to grief; we hadn't even the money for our tickets to London; and they told me that Mary wouldn't live unless I could take her to a nursing home where she would be properly looked after. But I was mad—I know it! I couldn't—I shouldn't really ever have kept my word."

"You took the money," he reminded her, "and you took it upon that understanding."

A note of passion crept into her tone. "I had to have it!" she declared. "Call it thieving, if you like. Charge me with theft; I'll plead guilty. I did steal the money. I stole it for her. Look at her now. Do you see how healthy she is? Wasn't it worth it?"

"I tell you that I do not care," he persisted, "to think of the money. I think rather of your promise—the promise that still remains."

She sat quite still, with closed eyes.

"I wish," he went on, "you wouldn't take it for granted that I am an enemy."

"If you are not an enemy," she replied swiftly, "why do you mention it at all? Why could you not have pretended that you did not recognize me, and have gone away? What does it matter to you? It is all over and done with."

He laughed in a self-satisfied sort of way. "Miss Sybil," he said, "I tell you frankly that I'm not unselfish enough for those things. I warn you that I am going to give you a bit of shock. It's a regular queer sort of thing that's happened to me. Oh, you'll be interested presently, if you'll listen. Don't understand it myself a bit," he continued, speaking half to himself now and watching the smoke from the cigarette that he had just lit curl its way upward. "Of course I've had heaps of affairs, and the marriage traps I've escaped from—God bless my soul!—I ought to write my memoirs, or whatever you call it, just to show people what a fellow with a title and a big income has to go through! That's what makes it so surprising."

"Makes what so surprising?" she asked.

He turned and looked at her. She began to shiver. A glimmering of the truth forced its way in upon her consciousness. There were things in his face,—the ugly things, as they seemed to her.

"You're not going to insult me—here!"

He smiled confidently. "If you call it an insult," he replied, "I am going to insult you in a new and unprecedented fashion. I am going to insult you in a way that pretty nearly any girl in London would jump at. I am going to show you that I too am capable of big things when I make up my mind. I am going to ask you to chuck Jermyn and marry me. Do you hear—marry me? I'll make you Marchioness of Lakenham!"

HER fingers were nervously entwined in the basket-work of her chair. She sat up a little. She even ventured to laugh unasily and to look at him once more. The complacency upon his face was a sublime exhibition.

"Of course you are joking!" she ventured.

"Joking be—hanged!" he exclaimed. "No wonder you're surprised! I don't know what it means myself."

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"It seemed to Jermyn at that moment that he could see the frightful struggle."

whisky and soda in one hand and a piece of bread and butter in the other. He was looking over toward Jermyn and Sybil with the satisfied smile of a man who has accomplished something worth doing.

"You look," Jermyn said, "as though you had received good news."

Lakenham threw back his head and a moment later set down his empty tumbler. "I have," he replied, "the best! Miss Cluley, you've lost all your color. Jermyn makes you do too much."

"I am afraid that the cricket was a little exhausting," Jermyn admitted. "After tea I think we'll let those youngsters look after themselves."

"We want you to play tennis," Mary begged, "you and I against the two boys. Lord Lakenham says you are awfully good. Do play! These boys think they have a chance, and I'd love to beat them. Arnold is rather a dear; but he is so conceited."

Jermyn glanced at Sybil.

a walk or do something?" he asked her doubtfully.

She smiled back at him reassuringly. "No, I am going to sit under the trees here and watch," she insisted. "Besides, Lord Lakenham has something to say to me. He has made so many charming speeches that I am really curious to find how long he will be able to keep it up."

CHAPTER X

LUCILLE, Sybil, and Lakenham sat in deep wicker chairs in a shady corner of the lawn, watching the tennis. Before the first game was over, however, Lucille, with a little sigh of regret, rose gracefully to her feet.

"It does not amuse me to watch those violent pastimes," she confessed. "Lord Lakenham has been dying to talk to you all day, Miss Cluley. He shall have his opportunity. I will write some necessary letters and earn his undying gratitude. Only, accept a word of advice from me. Believe nothing that he says. I